

It's so perfectly appropriate that when we found out that Barb's cancer had metastasized, we "flipped the script:" we would do *The Big Chill*, but in reverse. Instead of going to a funeral, we would spend 4 days with her while she was still well enough to enjoy it. And so, last September, we headed to her beloved Victoria. We rented a 5 bedroom house, kidnapped our sick friend, and installed her in the "Mistress Bedroom." We cooked for her, drank red wine with her, toured her beautiful home town with her, and one of us (who shall remain nameless, to protect his identity in the new police state in which we find ourselves in 2017), even got high with her.

We flipped the script.

And all who knew and loved Barb must realize how fitting that was. For her beauty, brains, and heart were magnificent, but always slightly unconventional, and in the most enchanting way.

Barb was the unquestioned queen of our small jewel of a school in Rome from 1975-1977. She had a boyish body, tall and strong with narrow hips, wide shoulders, and small chest, but she maneuvered it in the most natural, sensuous and alluring manner possible, so as to leave no question about her femininity.

Her huge brown eyes, radiant skin, round face and lips, drew everyone into her orbit---the popular and the shy; the geeks and the partiers; the Americans from the oil companies, and the wealthy and ultra-sophisticated Italians; the teachers, her classmates, and the youngest and most tentative freshmen. As one of our classmates remembered, boys and men alike swooned at her throaty laugh; girls and women were drawn to her broad smile.

Everyone adored the aptly named Barb Devine. And the best part was that she was as magnanimous as she was magnetic.

Not only gorgeous; Barb was also brilliant. She reminded us in September that she had been third in our class!!! She adored French and Art History and enjoyed a special bond with both teachers; Janet Kehl and Peter Rockwell. And way before her time she understood the importance of, and was fascinated by, the Mideast. She idolized Jack Ullman for his mastery of the history of that part of the world.

In fact, in the spring of our junior year, I completely lost jurisdiction over my school trip schedule. Barb took control, announcing one night that thenceforth we would always be with Mr. Ullman for trips.

And so we traveled rural Italy with our favorite teacher, hiking from town to town, breaking for magnificent lunches of prosciutto, cheese, fresh bread, and always flasks of red wine. No wonder none of us liked college at first! What could top what we had enjoyed in Italy at St. Stephens School?

Barb, always the energetic adventurer, continued that lifestyle to the end. At a time in life when many of us get complacent (boring), she only ramped it up, traveling to Cambodia to find small children to teach. She told us in September that it was the happiest she had been for a long time. It was bittersweet that she had found her calling relatively late in her way -too- short life.

She loved the far away and exotic. But she also adored all that was near, including her family, her country, her beautiful city of Victoria, her fellow Canadian, Neil Young, and her national hockey team. I remember lying in our tiny single beds as we readied for sleep in the corner room overlooking the Coliseum and the Circus Maximus as Barb described the natural beauty of Western Canada, her brothers and sisters, her “Mum,” and how proud she was of her Dad's career. These are the things and people she held close and dear.

She loved with a fierce pride, and nobody more than her two beautiful daughters, whom she told us all about in loving detail in September. Her boyfriend, Mark, told us that to the end she fought. She was brave; she was gracious; she was funny; and she was loving. Her last text to me, two weeks ago, was filled with questions about my life.

In September after we visited her mom and dad she confided that she desperately wanted to outlive them, if only to spare them the pain of the loss of her.

Alas, it didn't work out that way. But, if there is a God, she was most certainly looking for Barb this past Sunday afternoon. She had heard of a beautiful and brilliant Canadian woman who left the earth too soon, but was ready for the next adventure, always one to flip the script.

With all of our love,

Barb's Friends from St. Stephens School, in Rome

